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ABSTRACT

The booklet presents an account of the White House Conference on Handicapped Individuals and includes statements and remarks by President Carter and cabinet officials. Topics covered include the implications of Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, housing policies and transportation. Highlights from conference workshops on such topics as barriers, economic issues, recreation, and special concerns are reported. (CL)

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Programs for the HANDICAPPED

Office for HANDICAPPED INDIVIDUALS

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EC 101864

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION, AND WELFARE
Office of the Assistant Secretary for Human Development
Office for HANDICAPPED INDIVIDUALS Washington, D.C. 20201

IT HAPPENED IN WASHINGTON, D.C.

History was made by the White House Conference on Handicapped Individuals in Washington, D.C. The recent gathering of 3,200 participants was planned, coordinated and successfully staged by and for handicapped people. Delegates from every State worked tirelessly to make the conference an event to remember.

The real stars of the conference were the handicapped people themselves, who participated in workshops and panels, staffed booths, and hammered out recommendations on key issues.

The delegates were welcomed to Washington by President Carter, Members of the Cabinet, and Congressional leaders.

News conferences were covered by A.P., U.P.I., metropolitan dailies, and television cameras from NBC, CBS, ABC and PBS. Radio correspondents provided added special event coverage and interviews with conference participants.

Delegates met with their legislators and established a dialogue with government professionals. Pros and cons on major issues concerning the handicapped were reviewed and recommendations prepared for study by the Council Task Force.

Never before in the history of the Nation's Capital had there been a conference of handicapped people from every State--assembled to achieve the right of every citizen to pursue life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.

Delegates from every corner of the United States convening in Washington's Sheraton-Park Hotel

REMARKS OF THE PRESIDENT TO THE WHITE HOUSE CONFERENCE ON HANDICAPPED INDIVIDUALS

May 23, 1977

Do you think we are making some progress now? Do you think we have a long way to go? Do you think we are going to get there? Right on.

I am very proud to be here tonight in what I think is an historic occasion that will perhaps go down in the history of our country as a turning point in the minds and hearts of the American people in their long overdue concern about a large group of Americans, about 36 million, who in the past have too often been ignored.

This is the first White House Conference on Handicapped Individuals. I know that this is a tremendous assembly of leaders who have fought a long and sometimes discouraging battle to arrive here in Washington tonight. But this is not the first meeting. There have been dozens of meetings attended by thousands of people in the 50 States of our country, and you have already brought to the consciousness of local and State officials an awareness of potential change for the better and many improvements that have already been made.

Labor and industry can work together with government to make sure that jointly our efforts are successful. There is hardly a national leader on earth in all the 150 nations that span the globe who are not now thinking about two words: "Human Rights." And now we in our own country are applying those two words to the handicapped people of our country.

It is long overdue. For too long handicapped people have been deprived of a right to an education; for too long handicapped people have been excluded from the possibility of jobs and employment where they could support themselves; for too long handicapped people have been kept out of buildings, have been kept off of streets and sidewalks, have been excluded from private and public transportation and have been deprived of a simple right in many instances just to communicate with one another.

When I was inaugurated Governor of Georgia in January of 1971, I made a speech, and I said in that Southern State the time for racial discrimination is over, and I say to you tonight the time for discrimination against the handicapped in the United States is over.

It would be a mistake for the rest of America to think that the benefits are only going to the handicapped because when you get freedom, we share that freedom, and when the handicapped get benefits of education and a job and a purposeful life, we all share in the benefits of that education, that job and a purposeful life.

The Bill of Rights for Handicapped Individuals was spelled out in Title V of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, and we are going to enforce the regulations that are specified in that bill. We are going to enforce the regulations that tear down the barriers of architecture and we are going to enforce the regulations that tear down the barriers of transportation.

I know you have heard the announcement made by Secretary of Transportation Brock Adams about the Trans-Bus. We have spent millions of dollars--the Federal Government has spent millions of dollars--investing in the kind of public transportation that would serve your needs. And I am going to really enjoy in the future--as soon as these buses can come off the assembly line, and all of the new ones are going to be these kinds of buses--when they can come up to you on the sidewalk and kneel down to let you get in.

As you know, Section 504, of which I am sure you have all heard and of which I am sure now that Joe Califano has also heard, has provided a framework for the regulations that have now been adopted, and Joe Califano assures me and he assures you that these regulations are going to be enforced.

They require that when programs are made available to the public that those programs are made available to the handicapped public; the employers will give a handicapped person a fair chance to correct the handicap and to become qualified for an available job.

They require the tearing down of the barriers that I have already described to you. When Federal funds come to the Health, Education, and Welfare Department, and later on without delay they will apply to all programs of a similar nature, they will provide that a handicapped child, for the first time in the 200 year existence of our country, has the right to go to free public schools, and that that child has a right to go to free public schools in a regular classroom with other students.

It is almost inconceivable, and it is a reflection on all of us in leadership positions, that these basic rights have been delayed so long. These are times for thanksgiving, but for a sustained demand and a time to assess other opportunities in the future.

The civil rights of handicapped persons are not the only elements of the laws that have been put into effect. We have more than 100 different programs in the Federal Government already for the handicapped. They are administered by many different agencies. There are a lot of different kinds of definitions for the handicap of the same person, that that means that many of you who have sought for a long time to take advantage of these programs which the Congress and my predecessors in the White House have passed have often had to go to four or five or six different agencies to get the simple treatment or opportunities which you deserve under the law.

It is time for us to change that, and one of the very good benefits of the reorganization authority that Congress has now given me is to bring all of those programs for the handicapped together into one agency so you can understand them and take advantage of them.

As I look out across this tremendous auditorium, with many different kinds of handicaps represented here, I know that many of them could have been prevented in your early life. And we are not just concerned about the correction of an existing handicap or an opportunity for those who are handicapped; we want to prevent the handicaps that might occur in the future.

We have already proposed to the Congress a program for the screening, the health screening, of poor children, and within just a few years we will multiply five times the number of poor, young children who have a chance to see a doctor early in their life so their potential handicap or affliction might be prevented or corrected.

We now have 35 percent of the young children in this country who are not even immunized or inoculated against preventable diseases. When I was a child many years ago almost 100 percent of all American children were immunized. We have started a new program now under Joe Califano's leadership and have asked the Congress for authority to increase greatly this immunization program so that within just a short time we intend to approach the 100 percent level again.

There is a hope that there will never be any lack of memory for the struggle that has been effective in making this night and this conference possible. We want to be sure that we don't forget the handicapped among us who cannot hold a job, who cannot respond to a full education, but we want to make sure that even when they are dependent for constant help that they have every chance to grow and to learn and to take advantage of whatever great or small talent or ability God might have given them. We cannot forget them.

In closing, I want to ask you to do one more thing, and that is that since you have bound yourselves together in a common purpose, understanding one another and overcoming the differences that exist among you, that now you try to understand the special needs of the nonhandicapped, to understand the needs of other handicapped people.

It is not a time for hatred or lashing out or recrimination or condemnation of the nonhandicapped for the long delays in meeting your needs, because many people who are not handicapped cannot understand those special needs. So it is a time of education both ways, and for a realization that only when we work together--the handicapped who are leaders, the handicapped who will always be dependent, the potentially handicapped child who wants to have that prevented and the nonhandicapped adult leader--when we work together we can continue to make even greater progress.

I know that in my own life I have been inspired by the courage that exists among many of you. One of my most proud moments was when we administered the oath of office to Max Cleland, a young man who now heads up a tremendous Federal agency, the Veterans' Administration. When he was a tiny child he used to always ask God some day to let him work for his country and serve other people. He went to Vietnam as a volunteer after he was qualified, having finished college for his own professional career. He stepped out of a helicopter one day and saw a hand grenade on the ground, and trying to protect his fellow servicemen, he lost two legs and one arm. He stays in a wheelchair. But I have never been around Max Cleland when I realized or thought that he had any handicap that constrained the full realization of his early prayers, because he serves in government and he serves his fellow human beings. He is an inspiration to me, and his is an exhibition of constant courage which many of you also exhibit so well.

When I made my inauguration speech just a few months ago, I quoted a school-

teacher of mine, Miss Julia Coleman. She was a principal in a tiny school where I attended when I was a country boy. She taught me above and beyond the classroom how to write themes and how to debate and how to appreciate works of art and how to understand good music and how to read books that I would otherwise never have known to exist.

She was crippled, and she couldn't see the children in her classroom. I think she would have been a good teacher had she not been handicapped, but I think that knowing about her own shortcomings in a physical way gave an extra dimension and depth to her caring about other people.

Your conference is important. You are intelligent, courageous leaders, but because you have experienced suffering and because you have overcome it, I think the recommendations that will be coming from you that will affect the lives of many millions of people now and in the future will have that same extra dimension.

Our country needs you and I know that you will never disappoint those who look to you for leadership. Thank you very much.

Dr. Henry Viscardi, Jr., Chairman of the White House Conference on Handicapped Individuals and Secretary Joseph A. Califano of HEW discuss conference

REMARKS OF HEW SECRETARY JOSEPH A. CALIFANO, JR. AT THE WHITE HOUSE CONFERENCE ON HANDICAPPED INDIVIDUALS

May 23, 1977

Good evening, and a very warm welcome to the White House Conference on Handicapped Individuals.

A White House Conference is a catalytic event--one that focuses concerns and develops an agenda for action on matters of the greatest national importance.

Tonight you embark on this Conference with three vital goals:

- First, to provide a national assessment of the problems and the potentials of individuals with mental or physical handicaps;

- Second, to generate a national awareness of these problems which have meant that handicapped individuals have in the past been an oppressed minority, subject to unconscionable discrimination, beset by demoralizing indignities, detoured out of the mainstream of American life and unable to secure their rightful place as full and independent citizens; and

- Third, to make recommendations to the President and to the Congress which, if implemented, will enable individuals with handicaps to lead proud and productive lives, despite their disabilities.

Too often, however, the promise of a White House Conference has not been realized after the hotels have emptied and the media have carried away their cameras and typewriters.

But I know that this Conference will be different.

I know it will be different, in part, because of the fine leadership provided to you by Henry Viscardi, Jr., Chairman of the White House Conference, and by Jack F. Smith, Executive Director of the Conference. They, and their many coworkers, have been sensitive to the strong demands from all of you here tonight--and from the millions of handicapped citizens whom you represent--that the Conference emphasize practical, substantive issues that directly affect the lives of Americans with disabilities.

But the promise of this Conference will be realized for another, more profound reason. We are now entering a new era of civil rights for the handicapped individuals of America. And we will not turn back.

For too long, America's handicapped individuals have been victimized by demeaning practices and injustices. But now there is recognition that unjust obstacles to self-determination and fair treatment must fall before the force of law--an understanding that the Nation as a whole must end the shameful neglect of handicapped citizens and help translate many of their legitimate needs into legal rights and meaningful programs.

Last month, I signed a regulation implementing Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. As you know well, Section 504 prohibits discrimination solely on the basis of handicap against otherwise qualified handicapped individuals, in programs receiving federal financial assistance.

The 504 regulation is a landmark in the quest of handicapped citizens for equal treatment, and it will be a fundamental guidepost to the new era of civil rights for the handicapped. It calls for the following dramatic changes in the actions and attitudes of institutions and individuals who are recipients of funds from the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare:

- All new facilities must be barrier-free, i.e., readily accessible to and usable by handicapped individuals.

- Programs or activities in existing facilities must be made accessible to the handicapped within 60 days, and, if no other alternatives--such as reassignment of classes or home visits--will achieve program accessibility, structural changes in the facilities must be made within three years. No exceptions to the program accessibility requirement will be allowed.

- Employers may not refuse to hire handicapped persons, if reasonable accommodations can be made by them to an individual's handicap and if the handicap does not impair the ability of the applicant or employer to do the specific job.

- Employers may not require pre-employment physical examinations and may not make a pre-employment inquiry about whether a person is handicapped, or the nature or severity of a handicap, although employers may make a pre-employment inquiry into an applicant's ability to perform job-related functions.

- Every handicapped child will be entitled to free public education appropriate to his or her individual needs, regardless of the nature or severity of the handicap. In those unusual cases where placement in a special residential setting is necessary, public authorities will be financially responsible for tuition, room and board.

- Handicapped children must not be segregated in the public schools, but must be educated with the non-handicapped in regular classrooms to the maximum extent possible.

- Educational institutions and other social service programs must provide auxiliary aids, such as readers in school libraries or interpreters for the deaf, to ensure full participation of handicapped persons.

- All recipients of HEW funds must complete within one year a self-evaluation process, in consultation with handicapped individuals and organizations, to determine which of their policies and practices need to be changed to assure equal opportunity for handicapped Americans.

Section 504 and the 504 Regulation constitute a striking recognition of the civil rights of America's handicapped citizens, just as Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, and their companion regulations, are critical elements in the structure of law protecting the civil rights of racial minorities and women. But we must now begin the process of making the new regulation a reality for handicapped Americans.

I pledge that this process will be monitored forcefully, fairly and expeditiously by HEW. There are firm timetables in the regulation. We should stick to them.

Let me briefly share with you some of the steps we have taken or will take to assure compliance with the 504 Regulation. We have an outstanding new team of leaders in HEW's Office for Civil Rights, headed by David Tatel, a distinguished attorney with broad civil rights experience. We have begun work with the other Federal agencies and departments which will be issuing regulations similar to the 504 regulation and that will apply to all recipients of federal funds. We have already begun last week to mail out 36,000 assurance of compliance forms to HEW recipients. These are due back on July 5th. And, if we do not get a timely and adequate response, we will move immediately to enforce this requirement. We will be ready to begin processing complaints brought under Section 504 by June 1st. Over 200 complaints have been filed with the Department.

We have prepared, and begun to distribute, braille and recorded copies of the 504 Regulation so that handicapped citizens can learn firsthand of their rights.

We have planned--and will soon begin--a major public awareness campaign that will inform handicapped individuals of their rights, recipients of their obligations, and the American people, including business and labor, about the striking new change in law. Schools should understand mainstreaming; colleges should learn about the program accessibility requirements; other recipients should understand how to restructure jobs; and myths about handicapped and disabled people must be dispelled. A manual explaining 504 will soon be ready for wide distribution.

We will develop a technical assistance unit to assist recipients in complying with important requirements like mainstreaming and program accessibility.

We have established a new position in the Office for Civil Rights--the Deputy for Program Review--who will work directly with the other divisions of HEW so that program officers include civil rights compliance requirements in their basic operations. Through these and other measures, the Section 504 Regulation can work.

But voluntary compliance, aided by deep involvement of handicapped citizens and groups, will make the regulation work far more quickly. If handicapped individuals, recipients, leaders in public and private life, and the Federal Government, can be guided by sensitivity, fairness and common sense, then the regulation can immediately become a charter of equal opportunity, not an invitation to litigation.

But ending discrimination is only the first step in assuring that handicapped citizens can assume their rightful role as participants, to the fullest extent possible, in American society. As the next three days will demonstrate, the task of guaranteeing that handicapped individuals have equal opportunities in fact, and not just under the law, will require initiatives in many facets of our social and economic life.

For example, the Disability Insurance program, part of HEW's Social Security Administration, faces serious financial problems. The program provides monthly cash payments to severely disabled adults who have work experience covered by Social Security. Four million disabled individuals and their families receive benefits from the Disability Insurance program. More than $7 billion is paid out annually to these beneficiaries.

As you know, President Carter has recently sent Congress a proposal for restoring the sound financial status of the Social Security system, and the most urgent priority in that package is restoring the fiscal integrity of the Disability Insurance program. Without the legislation which we are sending to Congress, the Disability Insurance Trust Fund would be in default in 1979, bankrupting the Disability Insurance program.

President Carter plans to correct the deficit in the Disability Trust Fund, not by adding to the tax burdens of the low-income worker, but by raising the wage base for employers and more equitably spreading the costs.

With your support, President Carter's proposals can ensure that disabled individuals covered by Social Security continue to receive cash benefits. Millions of handicapped Americans deserve to have their confidence in the Social Security system restored.

During the next few days, you will discuss and debate many issues that, like the health of the Disability Insurance program, are of great significance to handicapped Americans.

On Thursday, I hope to return to you and discuss the work of the Conference and where we go from here.

But for now I just want to stress the warmth of my welcome to you, to echo President Carter's strong words of support, and to thank you--for the wisdom you will share with us and for the courage you have shown us, and all the American people.

REMARKS BY HUD SECRETARY PATRICIA ROBERTS HARRIS AT THE WHITE HOUSE CONFERENCE FOR HANDICAPPED INDIVIDUALS

May 25, 1977

"A person who is severely impaired," Helen Keller noted, "never knows his hidden sources of strength until he is treated like a normal human being and encouraged to shape his own life."

I share with the eight hundred delegates to this conference, the conviction that it is time to ask every part of government to re-examine its programs and policies to determine whether they encourage the handicapped to shape their own lives and to live independently.

Dr. Henry Viscardi, Chairman of the Conference, has stated the case succinctly, "The message from handicapped individuals and their families is very clear. They want action. They want follow-through. They want commitment . . . "

As the Secretary of the Department of Housing and Urban Development, I am here today to tell you that Americans with disabilities will get action and follow-through from HUD.

Four months ago HUD began the process of reviewing current programs and exploring new housing options for people with disabilities. A group of consumers met with me and then started to meet, on an informal basis, with HUD personnel who share their commitment to the handicapped.

That group of consumers included Dr. Frank Bowe and Jan Jacobi of the American Coalition of Citizens with Disabilities; Ms. Eunice Fiorito from the Mayor's Office for the Handicapped in New York; Clarke Ross from the United Cerebral Palsy Association; Susan Weis Manes of the National Association for Retarded Citizens; Cheryl Davis from the Massachusetts State Department of Community Affairs; and Robert Conklin of the National Association of the Physically Handicapped.

The preliminary recommendations which resulted from this interplay of ideas are being reviewed by the Department. Today, I would like to announce some immediate decisions, which were a product of this dialogue, that have been made to demonstrate HUD's commitment to Americans with disabilities.

First, effective June 6th, 1977, a new Office of Independent Living for the Disabled will be established in the Office of Housing. This office will be headed by David Williamson, a career employee of the Department, and will report directly to Assistant Secretary Simons. This will be the first time that the concerns for the disabled will be treated separately from those of the elderly. This will be the first time that the housing concerns of the disabled will have direct attention to HUD's principal production division.

I know Dave Williamson and Larry Simons will produce more housing options for Americans with disabilities. The new Office of Independent Living will work to

make HUD more sensitive to the needs of the disabled both at the Central Office and in the Field Offices. It will also be responsible for the activities of a departmental work group that will draft HUD's regulatory response to the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. The Carter Administration considers these new 504 Regulations to be the "Civil Rights Act" for America's disabled.

Second, HUD is establishing a goal that 5% of all new family housing units constructed under the Section 8 and public housing programs will be designed for use by the disabled. The Department currently assists in the production of specially designed units for the elderly disabled under the Section 202, Section 221-(d)-4 and public housing programs as well as other programs. This will be our first major commitment to the non-elderly disabled.

This new housing goal will mark the first of a series of steps by HUD to provide properly designed, accessible housing for the non-elderly handicapped. The Department will soon publish an amendment to the current Section 8 existing program. Small group homes and community residences, with shared kitchen and bathroom facilities, will be an eligible and viable housing option under the amendment. Additionally, I am working with the Counsel to the Secretary to develop other innovative approaches to the Section 8 existing program which will promote the deinstitutionalization of the mentally handicapped.

I would also like to note that we are well aware that housing without services is not adequate housing for people with disabilities. I will work with the Secretaries of Health, Education, and Welfare, Labor, and Transportation to develop comprehensive service programs for our housing programs.

Third, the Department will begin immediately a major effort to encourage local communities to spend a greater share of their Community Development Block Grant Funds for the elimination of architectural barriers, and the construction of rehabilitation facilities for the handicapped. It is the Department's belief, as recently outlined by Assistant Secretary Embry, that the handicapped represent a significant portion of the population for which the Community Development Program was intended. We believe that local expenditures for the handicapped constitute an expenditure that is beneficial to low and moderate income people. HUD is committed to an active leadership role to raise the current level of local expenditures to a level consistent with demonstrated need.

Fourth, I will continue the informal dialogue that now exists between the consumer advocates the the Department. I will also explore the possibility of establishing a Consumer Advisory Committee on Independent Living to help us make better use of our existing programs and to develop new programs so that there will be continued progress in this area.

Finally, I want all of you to know that I am committed, and the Department is committed, to doing all that is in our power to eliminate the barriers which prevent Americans with disabilities from enjoying the fullest possible participation in programs, and in the activities of our society.

Conclusion: I have outlined today some immediate steps that the Department of Housing and Urban Development has taken on behalf of persons with disabilities.

We all recognize that these steps are just the beginning of a much longer journey that will lead to the final elimination of the barriers that imprison 10% of our population, this lost minority of Americans.

It is up to all of us to work to change this society designed by the able-bodied, primarily for the ablebodied--into a society that encourages and supports satisfying life style for people with disabilities. Thank you.

HUD Secretary Patricia Roberts Harris meets the Press with Assistant Secretary Larry Simons (left) and David Williamson, Office of Independent Living

STATEMENT OF U.S. SECRETARY OF TRANSPORTATION BROCK ADAMS AT PRESS CONFERENCE ON TRANSBUS

May 19, 1977

I am announcing today my decision to require all new public buses purchased with Department of Transportation grants to be designed for easy access by elderly and handicapped persons.

I am directing the use of a new bus specification, requiring all buses offered for bid after September 30, 1979, to have a floor height of not more than 22 inches capable of kneeling to 18 inches above the ground and be equipped with a ramp for boarding.

This decision is based on a public hearing held by this department on March 15 and my review of the information and views submitted by bus manufacturers, groups representing the elderly and handicapped, the American Public Transit Association, and others.

A review of the history of the Transbus program convinces me that simply encouraging Transbus may not result in its introduction now or in the future. Even after this department invested about $27 million in the Transbus program, all serious efforts toward producing Transbus stopped when the Urban Mass Transportation Administration announced in July 1976 that it would not be mandated.

As most of you are aware, the Transbus program enlisted the aid of the three major domestic bus manufacturers to produce prototype buses that would attract greater ridership, be accessible to all passengers, including the elderly and physically handicapped.

I am aware that many who are opposed to mandating Transbus argue that it is not now within our ability to produce a low-floor, ramped bus which can operate safely and efficiently in day-to-day transit service. These objections are discussed in detail in the decision document and are, in my judgment, satisfactorily refuted.

Additionally, a Transbus mandate does not, in my judgment, interfere with the responsibility of local officials to plan for and implement mass transportation projects. Transbus, in fact, will permit faster and more efficient bus service by minimizing the time required to take on and discharge all passengers, including those who are elderly or handicapped.

I believe it is my responsibility to insure to the extent feasible that no segment of our population is needlessly denied access to public transportation. It is now within our technological capability to insure that elderly and handicapped persons are accorded access to urban mass transit buses. This access is fundamental to the ability of such persons to lead independent and productive lives. We cannot deny them rights that so many others enjoy, when it is within our ability to accord them such rights.

A review of the record convinces me that, at a minimum, the three major domestic bus manufacturers could begin Transbus deliveries within three and one-half years. This date allows almost two and one-half years for development before bidding would begin, and approximately 15 months thereafter before the buses are actually delivered.

As I said in my opening remarks at the Transbus hearing, we have a very competent bus manufacturing capability in this country as well as abroad, and I believe competition, as well as innovation, must be encouraged. I am certain that these manufacturers can meet the challenge of producing Transbus. Additionally, I believe the pressure of effective competition among the manufacturers will result in a prompt introduction of this needed improvement. If one manufacturer substantially beats the effective date of the mandate, we will consider sole source procurements to get Transbus on the streets as soon as it is available.

Further, I have decided to leave in effect the interim policy on accessibility for the elderly and handicapped. That is, manufacturers must continue to offer optional wheelchair lifts and local transit authorities must either purchase buses with lifts or provide special services for elderly and handicapped passengers.

* * * * * * * * * * *

For further information, contact: U.S. Department of Transportation
Office of Public Affairs
Washington, D.C. 20590

STATEMENT BY DR. HENRY VISCARDI, JR. CHAIRMAN, WHITE HOUSE CONFERENCE ON HANDICAPPED INDIVIDUALS

Disability is nothing new to me--I was born with it. I lived with it as a child and young man. Born without limbs, I came to know all the pity, pain, frustration, and disillusionment that is the life of the disabled. To me and millions of disabled Americans like me, freedom is the opportunity to seek the challenges of life and not the stale calm of some subsidized utopia. The White House Conference on Handicapped Individuals represents the culmination of my work in the fields of education, rehabilitation, and advocacy for physically and mentally handicapped children and adults.

While it has been a very gratifying experience, it is more importantly a prologue for the future. As we move into our third century as a free nation of diverse people, it is vital that handicapped individuals express their needs and potentials to elected officials and fellow citizens.

The White House Conference on Handicapped Individuals is a product of tens of thousands of man hours of effort. State and regional conferences throughout the nation have led us to this moment. We stand poised on the threshold of a new era for America's disabled. By working together, I am confident that we will achieve our ultimate goal of dignity, independence, and freedom of participation in all of life's activities.

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE WORKSHOPS

Workshop on Barriers

We must put aside personal needs and deal with all needs and this should be unanimous, agreed delegates at this workshop. Mark Francis, Oregon delegate, said action should be "all for one and one for all," rather than "just me first." "We're all here to deal with the problems of all the handicapped, not just specific groups," Francis continued. The blind (Francis is blind) are extremely well-organized and have a strong lobby, he said. They'll get more attention than some with other disabilities. According to the delegate, in every State, the blind have a separate agency looking after their needs, "while all other disabled people have only a (single) agency to look after their needs." Francis believes that the White House Conference has been a success. He feels that an important result of the Conference is a greater public awareness of just who the handicapped people are.

Joe Brown, Chief of the California State Department of Transportation, commented: "I think there is increasing polarization among the delegates because they are frustrated with trying to cover too much." Brown said Congress and the California State Legislature must have specific legislative proposals, not general recommendations.

Delegate Carlyn Landsberg from Delaware expressed opposition to the Administration's plans to tax larger "gas guzzling" automobiles. Since most handicapped persons must use larger cars in order to have adequate space, there should be an exception made for them, she pointed out.

Dennis Cannon, delegate from California, said the White House Conference on Handicapped Individuals disapproves the American Public Transit Association's (APTA) assertion that handicapped persons are divided on whether they want special transportation or transportation accessible to everyone. Cannon, who is Chairman of the Consumer Advisory Subcommittee to the Mobility for Elderly and Handicapped Committee of APTA, and a consultant to the Southern California Rapid Transit District, referred to APTA's publicly announced opposition to full access in public transit in favor of "full mobility," which is separate services. The transportation workshop passed a resolution calling for the elderly and handicapped to have the same rights as other persons to use public transportation facilities and services. Calling for a long-term objective of requiring all systems to be fully accessible, the resolution requires all transit vehicles purchased with UMTA funds after February 15, 1977, " . . to be accessible to the maximum extent technologically feasible."

Workshop on Economic Issues

The two major topics in the Economic Workshop were economic opportunity and economic security.

Under economic opportunity, the delegates called for a re-evaluation of physical screening requirements for employment in the Armed Forces to assure

against discrimination. Strong emphasis was also placed on establishing requirements to get employees and organizations involved early in the vocational rehabilitation process.

On the topic of economic security, Susan Spealberg, a Virginia delegate, pushed for a revision of existing service eligibility laws to prevent families of unemployable handicapped individuals from being forced to lower their living standard by using their income and savings to ensure economic security for disabled family members.

A delegate from Hawaii, Ann White, said, " . . more interest should be taken in unemployable handicapped people." She urged an exploration of situations where unemployables may be able to assist other handicapped people, and support of special radio and television programming to provide maximum opportunities for individual growth and development of unemployables.

Mack Freeman, Florida delegate, commented on modifying "negative attitudes" toward handicapped persons. Freeman stated lack of exposure was a big problem and attacked the business community, calling for a resolution beamed at "Madison Avenue" which would mandate the use of handicapped people in advertisements. "After all," he explained, "if handicapped people can eat Kellogg's Cornflakes, wash their clothes with Tide, and use other advertised products, they should be included in the advertisements of these products."

Lou Stark, a delegate from Wisconsin, urged strong support for a recommendation requiring all colleges and trade schools with an architectural curriculum to require a segment of instruction pertaining to accessibility.

Workshop on Health

Dr. J. Donald Millar, panel member in the Workshop on Prevention, said he was "inspired to have a dialogue with the receivers of services to the handicapped." Millar is Director of the Bureau of State Services of the Center for Communicable Disease Control, Atlanta, Georgia.

"Success comes in degrees," said New Jersey delegate Diane Butcher. "Handicapped people are now ready to fight for equal rights."

Deaf delegates to the workshop demanded that more doctors, nurses and teachers learn sign language for communicating with deaf people. Jacqueline Shield, from Maryland and the parent of a deaf daughter, said that "training professionals and greater awareness in hospitals and schools about disability will make screening, detection, identification and treatment more possible."

During the workshop on Health and Social Issues, the delegates demanded an "open world" for the handicapped. Instead of being "tax-eaters," they shall become taxpayers, delegates said. There is confidence in the future and it will produce more gatherings such as this Conference, according to the delegates present.

Delegate Lyn Meeks from Georgia also stressed the need for diagnosis and prevention. New legislation should prevent discrimination to any handicapped

individual and bring more awareness to the non-handicapped people, she said.

Health Workshop sessions expressed interest in a proposal to make health services to deaf persons linguistically accessible to all.

Workshop on Educational Concerns

Virgin Islands delegate William Lomax summarized the three-day workshop as "enlightening," and stated that it was an "incentive to demand more from our government for disabled people." He said he found that problems which he thought peculiar to the Virgin Islands were, in reality, "similar to Stateside problems." Lomax also praised the Conference in general for its "openness" and for the encouragement it offered to every delegate to speak out even when the delegate was "hard to understand."

The delegates to the Education Workshop felt that teachers were presently excluding disabled children from the classroom. They urged that "mainstreaming" techniques be used on teachers. They also suggested that more disabled teachers would also result in more disabled students in the regular classrooms.

Workshop on Aging

Senior citizens who also are disabled should have the right to work with an income means test, according to delegates to the Aging Workshop. An Alaskan delegate was cheered by the other delegates when he recounted the case of an Anchorage bus driver who, at the age of 70, "can work, wants to work, and is working."

Delegates to this workshop also stressed the importance of positive media presentation of disabled people. The need to combat stereotypes about older people was stressed.

Workshop on Research

Deploring a downward trend in federal spending for research since 1971, Dr. F. Ray Finley, Associate Director of the Krusen Center for Research and Engineering, Temple University, Moss Rehabilitation Hospital, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, called for expanding programs in basic research. Both professionals and the handicapped themselves should cooperate--as they are at the White House Conference--in pushing for additional research funds. He said that "it is very important for handicapped people to meet here and identify their concerns in an atmosphere of mutual cooperation with health professionals."

Workshop on Housing

"Incentives should be provided to integrate features designed for the handicapped, along with those for regular improvements in all buildings and remodeling," stated Harry Sparks, an architect and delegate from Kentucky, at the Housing Workshop. He added that a large part of the architectural barriers problem for the disabled is the lack of awareness of these barriers among architects. Other delegates to the Housing Workshop called on the

government to provide financial incentives to builders to meet handicapped people's needs.

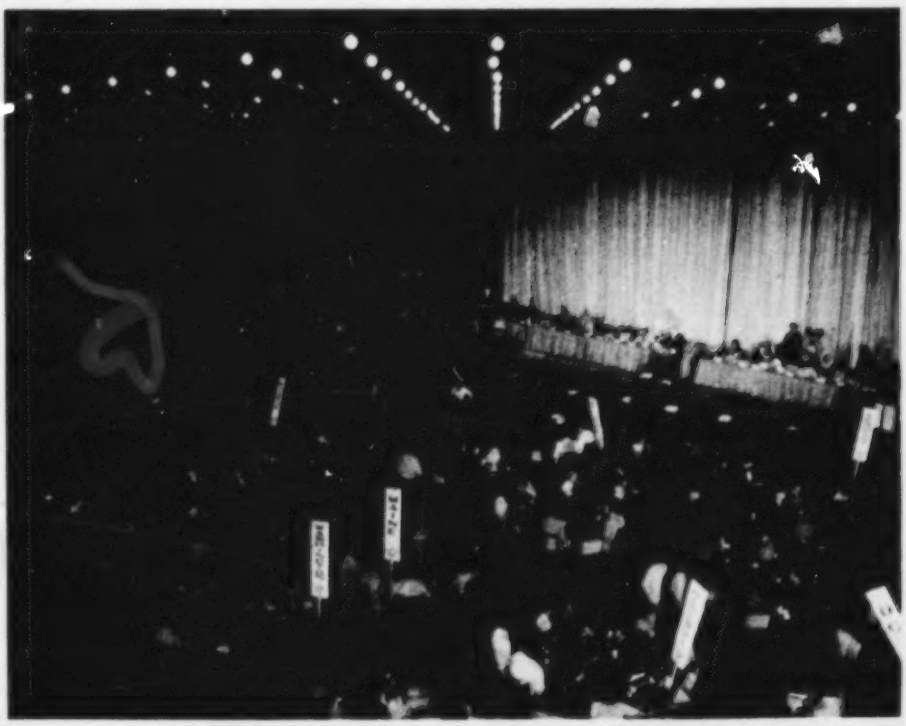
Workshop on Recreation

A delegate in the Recreation Workshop brought down the house when she said, "Prejudice is being down on things you're not up on."

The Recreation Workshop delegates demanded an end to prejudice and discrimination against handicapped people in buildings, transportation, parks and all recreational facilities. "Total accessibility" was their expressed goal.

Workshop on Social Concerns

Delegates attending the Workshop on Social Concerns maintained that handicapped people have a basic right to attend concerts, movies, art exhibits and other cultural events, and these events must be made accessible to them. Educators have the responsibility to promote events, not as therapy, but as "an enjoyable experience."



A view from the balcony as delegates gather for a dinner meeting in the ballroom of the Sheraton-Park Hotel

Workshop on Special Concerns

Native American, Black, Hispanic background, and Oriental delegates spoke out for cultural awareness training for service providers, multilingual staffing, and role-model publicity for successful handicapped minority individuals in the Workshop on Special Concerns. Several delegates, while recognizing the special interests of minorities, were concerned that specialization not work to the detriment of all disabled persons. Delegate Ray Fitzpatrick of Connecticut said, "Despite the special concerns that all of us have, it is important that we do not lose sight of why we are here. My particular interest is mental retardation --but we are here for all the handicapped."

Dave Kelley of Utah summarized: "We are all here for a common cause, i.e., to promote the needs and problems of handicapped people and to promote appropriate legislation at State and Federal levels. We must oppose efforts to splinter us. I am white, in a wheelchair all my life, and a college student. Any of these characteristics could be reason [illegible] in a faction, but I don't give a hill of beans about this. I'm here for all handicapped people."

One session focussed on the problems of disabled veterans. The group had a strong feeling that the Veterans Administration should develop job placement activities by eliminating time limitations for training, by mandating counseling of all disabled veterans at discharge, and by extending training in semi-skilled and technical areas.

Said delegate John Dean of New York: "I wasn't counseled when I was discharged --it took me over a year to find out about vocational rehabilitation in the Veterans Administration." The group expressed a high interest in the development of measures to retain persons who acquire disabilities in military service. Delegate Dave Kelley of Utah urged consideration of disabled civilians being permitted to join the military. "I'm 4-F and I don't like it. I have something to contribute too." This drew spontaneous applause from the group, many of whom were disabled veterans.

REMARKS BY JACK SMITH EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR WHITE HOUSE CONFERENCE ON HANDICAPPED INDIVIDUALS

We have listened to the voice of handicapped people through state conferences, and in planning the national conference. Now, the administrators and the Congress are ready to receive and act on your final recommendations--recommendations that will chart a new course.

I believe this White House Conference will be remembered in very positive ways. Health, social, economic, education and civil rights components affecting handicapped Americans will at last receive their proper focus in this country. Phrases like "separate but equal" can and must be eliminated from our vocabulary. Human rights for persons with physical or mental disabilities must mean independence, dignity and full participation in every corner of this nation and in every activity.

The conference's National Planning and Advisory Council is ready to help you make this the most productive White House Conference ever held. The achievements of this conference can light the way for future generations.

HARRIS ANNOUNCES INITIATIVES FOR THE HANDICAPPED

Patricia Roberts Harris, Secretary of Housing and Urban Development, announced that a new Office of Independent Living for the Disabled will be established in HUD.

This new office will report directly to the Assistant Secretary for Housing, and will work to make HUD more aware of the housing and environmental needs of Americans with disabilities.

At the same time, the Secretary announced several other actions that will be taken to provide more access to Federal housing programs for people with disabilities.

Included in these initiatives is Secretary Harris's decision to set the goal that five percent of all new family units constructed under the Section 8 and public housing programs be designed for use by the handicapped.

"This new housing goal," she said, "will mark the first of a series of steps by HUD to provide properly designed, accessible housing for the non-elderly handicapped." Other steps will be taken to remove barriers that prevent the disabled from participating more fully in normal activities. They are:

- Local communities will be urged to spend a larger share of their community development block grant funds to eliminate architectural barriers and to build rehabilitation facilities.

- HUD will explore innovative approaches to developing alternative housing environments for the mentally disabled.

- Through the new Office of Independent Living for the Disabled, HUD will make a greater effort to sensitize the Department to the needs of the disabled.

- Under the leadership of the Office of Independent Living a work group will be set up to draft, in cooperation with consumer and advocacy groups, HUD regulations spelling out civil rights for people with disabilities.

- The Secretary will continue working with the Ad Hoc Committee on Independent Living that was established three months ago, to work with consumers.

- She will also explore the possibility of establishing a consumer advisory committee on independent living to make better use of existing programs and to develop new programs to ensure continued progress in this area.

Secretary Harris also noted HUD's past accomplishments in providing housing for people with disabilities under the Section 202 program.

The Secretary pledged that action will be taken to convert HUD's commitments to persons with disabilities into realities.

"ACCESS AMERICA" NATIONAL PUBLIC AWARENESS CAMPAIGN TO BE LAUNCHED

"ACCESS AMERICA" is the new trademarked slogan to be used by the federal Architectural and Transportation Barriers Compliance Board (A&TBCB) in a national public awareness campaign to promote access to and use of all buildings and facilities by all Americans.

To be launched within a year, the national campaign will create awareness of architectural, transportation, and attitudinal barriers affecting millions of people and promote barrier-free design in the man-made environment.

The A&TBCB was created by Congress in 1973 primarily to ensure compliance with standards prescribed under federal laws which require that all buildings and facilities owned, occupied, or financed by the United States Government be accessible to and usable by physically handicapped persons.

The major governmental force providing national leadership to make the man-made environment functional for all people, the A&TBCB is composed of nine federal agencies: Health, Education, and Welfare; Transportation; Housing and Urban Development; Labor; Interior; Defense; General Services Administration; Postal Service; and Veterans Administration. For further information, contact the Architectural and Transportation Barriers Compliance Board, Room 1014 MES Building, 330 C Street, S.W., Washington, D.C. 20201.

ACCESS TO PUBLIC BUILDINGS AND TRANSPORTATION FOR HANDICAPPED

Enforcement of federal law requiring independent access to public buildings and transportation for handicapped persons was the major issue of a public awareness conference recently conducted by the National Advisory Committee on an Accessible Environment at the University of California in Berkeley. The meeting was sponsored by the University of California Disabled Students Union.

Enforcement and compliance processes used by the federal government's Architectural and Transportation Barriers Compliance Board (A&TBCB) were explained.

The A&TBCB ensures compliance with standards prescribed under federal laws which require that all buildings and facilities owned by the United States Government be accessible to and usable by physically handicapped persons.

The National Advisory Committee on an Accessible Environment was established to provide guidance, advice, and recommendations to the A&TBCB. It meets quarterly in different locations in the nation. The 16 members of the committee, which represents handicapped citizens, come from across the nation. The majority of them are handicapped.

The conference in Berkeley was the first of a series of such public awareness conferences to be held in various regions of the country.

NEW PAMPHLET TELLS HOW TO MAKE COMPLAINT ABOUT BUILDINGS INACCESSIBLE TO HANDICAPPED

A new pamphlet explaining how to make a complaint about an inaccessible federally financed building has been published by the Architectural and Transportation Barriers Compliance Board (A&TBCB).

Access America: The Architectural Barriers Act and You is a guide to the complaint process and enforcement rules used by the A&TBCB to ensure compliance with the Architectural Barriers Act of 1968.

The pamphlet explains that any person--including those who are handicapped--has the right of independent access to buildings and facilities constructed, leased, or altered for the federal government or with the use of federal funds. How to make a written complaint and what happens to it is detailed. The pamphlet puts in everyday language the A&TBCB's "Practice and Procedures for Compliance Hearings" published in the Federal Register on December 20, 1976.

SUMMARY OF SELECTED LEGISLATION RELATING TO THE HANDICAPPED

The booklet, A Summary of Selected Legislation Relating to the Handicapped: 1975-1976 contains brief synopses of legislation enacted by the 94th Congress which affects physically and mentally handicapped persons. It is designed to help program planners, students and interested citizens gain insight into laws which authorize programs with varied objectives benefiting handicapped persons.

Single copies are available from: Office for Handicapped Individuals
Department of Health, Education, and Welfare
Room 338D South Portal Building
Washington, D.C. 20201

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